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ABSTRACT

Research assessing sex-role characteristics has been derived from personality assessments or interests and has often reflected the conceptual biases of the researchers. A study was conducted using common but unselected attributions by requiring absolute judgments and by using factor analysis on the data. The 367 adjectives were selected by methods designed to eliminate any researcher bias. Participants (N=683) were men and women from an introductory psychology class. Stereotypic judgments were obtained by having two groups of men and two groups of women, with 50 subjects in each of the two groups, rate the extent to which a characteristic described a typical male or female today on an 11-pont scale. Self-characterizations were obtained by having 69 men and 84 women describe themselves on the same scale. Ratings of desirability characteristic of the typical male, female, and self were made independently. Men and women had high agreement concerning the attributes of typical males and females with a correlation of .76. Differentiating characteristics were identified. The results do not support traditional findings of the lesser desirability of the feminine stereotype compared to the masculine stereotype. The single factor which explained 83.3 percent of the total variance conflicts with results from earlier studies. (ABL)

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SEX ROLE STEREOTYPING AND SELF-CHARACTERIZATIONS BY COLLEGE MEN AND WOMEN

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Running head: Sex-Role Characterization

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Abstract

A list of 367 broadly based traits, descriptive of people in general, were used in making absolute and independent rather than relative and sequential judgments of typical males and typical females by separate groups of 50 college men and 50 college women. The evaluation of each of the traits were also obtained independently. Also, separate groups of men and women used the traits for self-characterization. The intercorrelation of these ratings were examined. Men and women agreed strongly on the evaluation and typical ratings. Their self-characterizations were highly correlated (r = .95). Women stereotyped to a lesser degree and tended to evaluate typical females more positively. Self-characterizations were not differentially associated with evaluation. Factor analysis of the mean ratings using traits as cases and rating conditions as variables yielded a single important factor explaining 83.3 percent of the total variance. The undue emphasis of the psychological differentiation of the sexes was underscored.

A Re-Examination of Sex-Role Characterization

Prior attempts to assess sex-role characteristics have usually involved assumptions and procedures that predetermine the nature of the findings. Typically attention has been focused on the determination of differences in the responses or behavior of men and women. The search for differences has often been based on content derived for a completely different purpose, such as personality assessment, as in the case of Williams and Bennett (1975), or interests (Strong, 1936). In other instances it has been limited to those items for which sex differences might have been anticipated (Terman and Miles, 1936; Rosenkrantz, Vogel, Bee, Broverman and Broverman, 1968). Occasionally, it has involved the added assumption that characteristics must be desirable for either or both sexes (Bem, 1974). The methods of scoring the selected characteristics has further reflected the conceptual biases of the investigators. The use of difference scores for male and female items produces a bipolar conception of masculinity-femininity (Terman and Miles, 1936) while the separate scoring of the two sets of items suggests the existence of two independent dimenssions. Finally, judgments of men and women have often been relative or sequential (Sherriffs and Jarret, 1953; Der-Karabetian and Smith, 1977), procedures which have been interpreted to maximize artificially the differences between men and women (O'Leary, 1974; Williams and Bennett, 1975).

The present study attempts to correct for these potentially confounding elements by using attributes that are common but otherwise unselected, by

requiring absolute and independent rather than relative or sequential judgments, and by exploring the dimensionality of the resulting data by means of factor analysis rather than imposing it. Given the fact that past investigations have often involved the preselection of items by tapping the stereotypes of persons and then subjecting them to empirical test, both stereotypic and self-descriptive data will be employed.

Method

Characteristics

In order to avoid the preconceptions of the investigators, all adjectives that might apply to persons were selected from the list of words that were found to occur with a frequency of 10 per million or more (Kucera and Francis, 1970). Items from the Adjective Check List (Gough and Heilbrun, 1965) and the Ben Sex Role Inventory (Ben, 1974) were also included.[3] This yielded a total of 367 adjectives.

Subjects

A total of 683 men and women from the Introductory Psychology class at the university of Kansas participated in the study as part of a course research requirement.

Procedure

Stereotypic judgments were obtained by having two groups of men and two groups of women, with 50 subjects in each of the four groups, rate the extent to which a characteristic described the typical male today or the typical female today. Ratings were made on an 11 point scale ranging from zero (absolutely not true) to 10 (very true). Self-characterizations were

obtained by having 69 men and 84 women describe the extent to which they possessed each attribute on the same scale.

Finally, The items were divided into three subsets and each item in each subset was judged for desirability (desirable for a person to have) by six separate groups of men and women with 55 persons in each group. Judgments were made on a 21 point scale with -10 representing "highly undesirable for a person to have" to +10 indicating "highly desirable for a person to have". In effect, ratings of desirability, characteristic of typical male or female, and characteristic of self were all made independently of one another. From the data available it was possible to determine the relative placement of each item in each of the 8 rating conditions for individuals and for the group as a whole.

Results

The mean ratings made by women showed consistently higher variability than those made by men ($p < .01$). Therefore, to make the ratings by men and women comparable the mean scores of the 367 traits were transformed with a mean of 500 and a standard deviation of 100.[4] All further analyses of the mean scores were based on these standardized scores.

Analyses of Mean Ratings

Men and women agreed highly on the ratings of the typical male ($r = .92$), the typical female ($r = .92$) and the evaluation of the characteristics ($r = .98$). Separate intercorrelations of the different mean ratings by men and women are shown in Table 1. The results indicated that women

tended to characterize the typical male and the typical female in much more similar terms than men did, r's being .81 and .61, respectively, $z = 5.662$, $p < .001$ (Hotelling, 1940).

Insert Table 1 about here

While for men the correlation between evaluation and typical male ($r = .63$) and typical female ($r = .71$) were not different, for women the same correlations were significantly different, .72 and .83, respectively ($F = 3.99$, $p < .05$). The correlations of the mean self-characterization of men with the mean evaluation ratings was identical to the correlation of the same ratings made by women, r's = .93.

For women the correlations of the self-characterizations with the same sex typical ratings ($r = .93$) was significantly higher than with the cross sex typical ratings ($r = .81$), $F = 11.51$, $p < .001$. For men the same correlations were not different, .76 and .77, respectively. The mean self-characterizations of men and women showed virtual identity, $r = .95$.

Factor Analysis

The mean ratings of the typical and self-characterizations of men and women together with the evaluation ratings were factor analysed using principle components and varimax rotation. The 367 traits were considered as cases and the rating conditions as variables. This way, if masculinity and femininity were separate dimensions than two factors would emerge one loaded with typical female and self-characterization ratings by women

and the other loaded with typical male and self-characterization ratings by men. If masculinity and femininity were bipolar dimensions one important factor would emerge with loadings of these sex appropriate ratings in opposite directions. However, a single important factor with consistent loadings emerged that explained 83.3 percent of the total variance. All the rating conditions including evaluation were in the factor and showed extremely high loadings in the upper 80's and 90's.

Discussion

Sex-Role Stereotypes and Self-Characterizations

The present results support earlier findings that men and women are in very strong agreement concerning the attributes of typical males and females (Rosenkrantz, et al., 1968; Williams and Bennett, 1975). However, women tend to characterize typical males and females in much more similar terms than men do. This is consistent with other findings which suggest that females tend to stereotype sex roles to a lesser degree than males (Der-Karabetian and Smith, 1977; Fagat, 1973; Maccoby and Jacklin, 1974; Segfried and Henrrick, 1973).

Since there was high agreement between men and women concerning the attributes of typical males and females, there scores for the typical male were combined as were those for typical female and correlated. The combined scores yielded a correlation of .76. This indicates that typical men and women are perceived to be alike to a very high degree, although there is some unexplained variance in the correlation. Conceivable sources of the

unexplained variance may be stereotyping and error. The extent of the similarity of men's and women's characteristics became more conspecuous when the correlation of the mean self-characterizations were considered, $r = .95$. Furthermore, the characteristics which men and women attributed to themselves were more similar ($r = .95$) than those they attributed to typical members of the two sexes ($r = .76$), $z = 11.28$, $p < .001$.

To partially explain the source of the unexplained variance in the typical ratings, most differentiating items were identified. This was done by subtracting the transformed mean ratings of typical females from those of typical males and items that yielded differences of 100 or more were examined (transformed mean = 500, S. D. = 100). Thus, 25 characteristics were obtained that were more true of typical males and 22 characteristics that were more true of typical females. But, when the same was done for self-characterization scores only 2 characteristics were more true of men and 1 of women. These differences were traditinally obtained stereotypes of males and females such as dominant, rough, forceful, independent for men and tender, affectionale, weak, unpredictable for women.

These provide support for the traditional argument that differential sex-role stereotypes do exist and that they may not be totally justified. However, there is also support for the notion that stereotypes of men and women are at least as similar as they are different when a wide range of human and unselected characteristics are considered.

Evaluation of Sex-Role Stereotypes and Self-Characterizations

Earlier findings (Kitay, 1940; McKee and Sherriffs, 1957; Rosenkrantz, et al., 1968) have reported the lesser desirability of the feminine stereotype compared to the masculine. It was argued above that the use of highly differentiating attributes of men and women in earlier studies may have contributed to the biased representation of how much men and women differ and how differently masculine and feminine stereotypes are evaluated. Using a broader and more representative set of attributes to define the typical male and the typical female, the present study does not support traditional expectations. The combined mean characterizations of the typical male and female were not differently associated with the combined evaluation ratings, r's being .69 and .80, respectively. In fact, when the correlations were made separately for the men and women respondents the trend for the typical female characteristics to be more desirable achieved significance for women. It is possible that non-differential evaluation may have been the true state of affaires all along which was not detected by earlier studies because of the restricted and highly differentiating nature of the attributes utilized. However, it is also possible that this may reflect an actual change of earlier evaluation tendencies, perhaps as a consequence of increased awareness of sex-role disciminations against women. Although the data considered here do not provide a direct test of such a trend, they are consistent with other recent findings such as Der-Karabetian and Smith (1977) and Nelson and Doyle (1975).

Furthermore, the present results do not lend any support to the

traditional contention that women's self-concept is less positive than Men's self-concept (Bennett and Cohen, 1959; Broverman, Vogel, Broverman, Clarkson and Rosenkrantz, 1972). The self-characterizations of men and women were very highly and equally correlated with evaluation of the traits, $\underline{r}$'s = .93.

Single Factor

The single factor which explained 83.3 percent of the total variance in the characterizations of males and females is inconsistent with earlier factor analytic results (Gonen and Lansky, 1968; Jenkin and Vroegh, 1969) which suggest that sex roles may be conceptualized in terms of both unipolar as well as bipolar dimensions. This raises some very serious questions about the traditional conceptualizations of masculinity and femininity, specially concerning the emphasis on maximal differentiation as the core of their definitions.

Taken together, these results reflect the early recognition by well known theorists of individual differences, such as Thorndike (1911, p. 30), Strong (1955, p. 121) and Cattell (1965, p. 260), of the undue emphasis given to the psychological differentiation of the sexes.

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Footnotes

[1] This article is based on parts of the dissertation by the first author at the University of Kansas.

[2] Presently at the University of La Verne. Reprint requests should be addressed to Dr. Aghop Der-Karabetian, Behavioral Science Department, University of La Verne, 1950 Third Street, La Verne, California 91750.

[3] The Adjective Check List and the Bem Sex Role Inventory items were used to allow comparisons with exploratory new measures of sex roles discussed in the dissertation. See Dissertation Abstracts International, 1979, 39, 3584-B.

[4] The list of the characteristics and their transformed mean ratings in each of the 8 rating conditions may be obtained from the first author.

Table 1

Intercorrelation of the Mean Ratings of Traits by Men and Women of Evaluation, Typical Male, Typical Female and Self

	Evaluation	Typical Male	Typical Female	Self By Men
Evaluation		.63*	.71	.93
Typical Male	.72		.61	.76
Typical Female	.83	.81		.77
Self By Women	.93	.81	.93	

Note. Ratings by men is in the upper right half and ratings by women is in the lower left half.

* All correlations are significant at $p < .001$